1: Powdermaker E-5 (1929-1930) 1933 OM10 New Ireland OM10
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sister officiated at one of these rites which I witnessed. 844
Later, on the same day, there is again the playful fighting between the women of opposite moieties. At the birth of the infant Murri in Ambwa the Eagle women of that village came to Lesu, three miles away, to indulge in this playful fighting with the wife of the new mother's brother, i.e. her sister-in-law. Also Hawk women from the more distant village of Libba came to Ambwa to fight playfully with the Eagle women there.

During the first day of his life the infant will become 844
betrothed. If the newly-born infant is a girl, the mother of 584
some boy of the opposite moiety will come up and "mark" the infant as the future wife of her son. No ritual is concerned with the "marking," the native name for which is *disirani*. The prospective mother-in-law merely announces the betrothal, and later brings a piece of baked taro, which she has chewed first, and gives it to the infant. If the newly-born infant is a boy, the father of some girl will "mark" him as the future husband of his daughter. The infant betrothal of female infants seems to be more common than it is for male infants, and Murri was not betrothed. The parents of the infant never object. As a matter of fact, the infant's father usually knows nothing about it until after it is over, as he is not present in the house just after the birth. When he does come in his wife tells him who has "marked" the child. As will be seen later, quite frequently this infant betrothal is not consummated in marriage, and both parties take other mates.

On the day of the birth, or on the following day, should 844
the baby have been born late in the day, a distribution of 851
coconuts and taro takes place. At the birth of the infant Murri this feast was held the day after his birth. A large group of women from Ambwa and Lesu were assembled for the feast. The Lesu women walked to Ambwa, and as they neared the village, moving in single file on the narrow

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844 851 footpath through the bush leading from the road to the beach, and led by Maerabit, they yelled loudly, announcing their approach. As soon as they arrived, they filed into the house where the new baby was lying. In many little ways they showed their affection and joy in the new child, patting him and "crowing" over him. The infant's mother was not with him, but was in the cook-house preparing taro, and her mother was with the baby.

844 851 431 The women filed out of the house, and in their usual nonchalant manner sat on the ground waiting for the distribution of food. Murri, the infant's mother's brother, was master of ceremonies, and stood by the pile of coconuts and made a short speech, saying that these coconuts and taro were for the new infant, that this was only a small distribution of food, but that later they would have a much bigger feast. He was then assisted by the matrilineal grandfather of the infant in the distribution of the food to the women, who had all brought coconuts to the feast, and thus contributed as well as received them. First, each woman was given four coconuts, which was regarded as a new gift, then she received a large pile which was considered as a return gift for those she contributed. Each woman fills her [482] basket with the taro and coconuts. They all walk home together, with the baskets on their backs.[1]

844 Women of the opposite moiety have celebrated the arrival of a new member to the community by playfully fighting each other for months before he arrived and on the day of his birth. He was ushered into the world in feminine company; his grandmother and other women of his hamlet were

[251] [1] Usually, at this feast, some of the taro has been prepared in a special way months in advance. The inside is scooped out and it is baked and hung up on the ceiling of the house to dry for many months. The resulting taro is hard and brittle, quite different from the ordinary baked taro and is considered a delicacy. The few who know this method usually begin preparations as soon as they hear of a pregnancy, and long before the actual birth.

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842 affirms that copulating with her husband afterwards makes the children his. One woman, Numda, was an exception, and frankly told me that two different lovers were the fathers of two of her children. She said she knew this was so because of the resemblance of the children to their respective fathers. Her husband knows it too, as did also the two fathers, one of whom gave *tsera* to his child. Both the lovers died when the children were quite young.

848 851 In this society, where every woman has a husband who accepts all of her children regardless of their actual father, there are no illegitimate children. But, as always, the usual exceptions occur, and there are a few unmarried women—a widow who has not yet remarried, or some young girl who has not married for some reason or other as soon as she has come of age.[1] Now if such an unmarried woman becomes pregnant her lover is under no obligation to marry her, and takes no responsibility for any issue. First, he does not know if the child is really his, as the woman has probably had several lovers. Secondly, all he wanted was intercourse, not marriage, and the Melanesian distinguishes very clearly between the two. His attitude is in striking contrast to that of the husband, who accepts all of his wife's children as his own, regardless of whether they actually are or not. Should an unmarried woman have children, there is no social ostracism of her or the children. Landa, the widow with ringworm disease, has already been mentioned. Her children have no father, but both they and the mother have a social position in the community equal to anyone, and are not affected by the lack of a father and husband. While no disgrace is attached to a fatherless child, still it is considered unfortunate not to have a father, one of the

848 773

[1] To-day the reason may be that her betrothed is away working on a plantation, and she is waiting for him to return. But even in the past there were occasionally women who were not married as soon as they came of age. See the individual life histories.

4: Powdermaker F-6 (1929-1930)1931 OM10 New Ireland OM10
Lesu

census are compared whenever possible to the results of this genealogical study of a smaller unit of the same people, for the purpose of checking the accuracy of the latter study.

ETHNOLOGICAL FACTS

Before presenting the tables it is pertinent to give a few ethnological facts related to the statistics. This group of Melanesians are an agricultural, matrilineal and matrilocal people, with exogamous moieties subdivided into clans. There is no scarcity of land, which is communally owned, and getting sufficient food is not difficult, although it requires a certain amount of industry. The diet is limited, taro being the staple food. This is supplemented by fish, pigs, yams, bananas, pawpaws, coconuts, etc.

Sexual customs have an important bearing on the statistics. A girl is usually married directly after her first menstruation. A man's preferred mate is the mother's brother's daughter's daughter, or the father's sister's daughter's daughter, and he is thus of a generation above his wife. While the preferred marriage quite frequently does not take place, the husband is almost always older than his wife, usually a difference of about five to ten years. The girl has had no sexual intercourse, although she has indulged in sexual play, but the man, being some years past puberty, has had sexual experience previous to the time of his marriage. There are no unmarried women. There may be a couple of young widows in the community, but it is just a question of time before they remarry. Both husband and wife have extra-marital intercourse and there is no social stigma in having lovers or mistresses. Rather, it is the correct thing to do. The husband of the mother is always the sociological father of her children. Until very recently it was quite usual for a man to have two wives and this had been the case with most of the married men of my community. It was relatively rare for a woman to have two husbands, although it did and still does happen occasionally. Missions have taught a monogamous system of marriage, with partial success. Polygamy still exists, but not to the same degree or extent as it did a generation ago. White contact has scarcely affected extra-marital intercourse. Should the village be close to a mission center (mine was not) love affairs would simply be carried on more surreptitiously,